For Mr. Chas. Pennock

A

FUNERAL SERMON,

Preached by

FRANCIS GILBERT,

On Sunday the First of May, 1774.

In the Town of St. John, in Antigua,

On the Death of

NATHANIEL GILBERT, *Esq;*

Of the said Island.

Who departed this Life 20th April, 1774.

☞ *Tho' dead—He yet speaketh.* Heb. xi. ver. 4.

ANTIGUA:

Printed by ROBERT MEARNS, *Ann. Dom.* 1774.

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FRANCIS GILBERT,

On Sunday the 31st of May, 1772.

In the Town of St. John's in ANTIGUA,

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Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright: for the End of that man is Peace.

Psal. xxxvii. ver. 37.

IT will be needless, my dear friends, to tell you, that the cause of our solemnly assembling ourselves together at this time in the presence of Almighty God, is to me the most grievous and heart-affecting of any I have ever met

with, ſince a diſpenſation of the Goſpel has been committed to me; and I am perſuaded that many of you ſympathize with me as fellow-members of one glorious head, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But, as the Apoſtle ſaid, *Wo be to him if he preached not the Goſpel*; ſo may I ſay, Wo be to me, if I fail to improve this late awful event, as God ſhall enable me, to the purpoſes for which Infinite Wiſdom hath ſent it, even to our mutual edification and inſtruction. We are called upon by the Prophet, *to hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it*, and in the words of my text, *to mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* There is not a greater proof of a hard and incorrigible heart, than to be inattentive to the moſt ſtriking circumſtances of Divine Providence, whether they be judgments or mercies, for it is by theſe, as well as by his Holy Spirit, that God ſtrives with man, to draw his mind from the vanities of time to the grand concerns of eternity. O! how ſhould we then fear and tremble, leſt hardening our hearts againſt all the loud calls of God, he ſhould at laſt *ſwear in his wrath, that his ſpirit ſhall no more ſtrive with the ſinners of this land.* My text has a near affinity to thoſe words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, where he ſolemnly commands his diſciples and followers, *to let their light ſo ſhine before men, that they may*

ſee

ſee their good works, and glorify their father who is in heaven, and they alſo throw a great light upon them. We hereby ſee why we are exhorted to *mark the perfect man, and to behold the upright*, not, as you may ſuppoſe, out of idle curioſity; but that by ſeeing their *good works*, and the happy iſſue of a life ſpent altogether in the fear and ſervice of the Lord, we may be influenced in like manner to *glorify our father who is in heaven*, and become imitators of them, *who through faith and patience now inherit the promiſes*, that is to ſay, eternal life.

In order therefore, that we may duly conſider the character of the perfect or upright man, ſo as that we may be influenced to copy the bright example, it may not be improper to view him in the light of God's word; and when we have briefly deſcribed him, to conſider the bleſſed effects of his perfection and uprightneſs, which is, that *the end of that man is peace*; and then, what can be more eligible, or how ſhall our preſent meeting be better improved, than by affectionately exhorting you to make an application of the whole to your own hearts and conſciences; ſo that you may not be forgetful *hearers* of God's word, but *doers* of it, and be bleſſed in your deeds.

It is neceſſary then to obſerve, that there is not a man upon earth that can agreeably to God's word, be termed a perfect and an upright man by nature; for tho' God at firſt made man ſo, yet we are told, that he hath found out many inventions. He did not abide in honour, but departed from his original righteouſneſs. Tho' our firſt parent was made in the image of God, that is in righteouſneſs and true holineſs, yet he tranſgreſſing the law of God, *we all became ſinners*, by his diſobedience, *and death paſſed upon all men* in conſequence of the general defection. And we know by fatal experience that *we are all by nature alienated from God, ſtrangers to his covenant of love, without God, without Chriſt, and without Hope in the world. We are born like the wild Aſſes colt, and go aſtray*, as the Scriptures tell us, *from the womb*. In this ſad ſtate we are all involved by nature. *There is no difference, for all have ſinned*, ſaith St. Paul, *and come ſhort of the glory of God, and there is none that doth good, no; not one. Therefore, by the Deeds of the law* as the ſame Apoſtle ſaith, *ſhall no man be juſtified*, and a greater than he, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, tells us that *we muſt be born again*. That is, as by reaſon of man's diſobedience, a great and univerſal change has paſſed upon him, ſince he firſt

firſt came out of the hands of God, by which he is become a miſerable, guilty, dying ſinner; ſo muſt he being in that deplorable ſtate, experience as univerſal and great a change by the Grace of God, and the operation of his holy ſpirit to make him alive again to God, or as in the words of my Text, *a perfect and upright man*. The firſt advance to this happy change is a deep conviction of ſin, a ſenſe of the wrath of an offended God, and ſuch a ſight of our own wretchedneſs as to deſpair of ſaving ourſelves, or of ever ſeeing God with joy in conſequence of any works of righteouſneſs that we have done, or can ever do: ſuch a feeling ſenſe of our demerit, as to make us cry out with the trembling Jailor, " Sirs, what muſt I do to be " ſaved;" as alſo with the Publican, " God be merciful " to me a Sinner," and with Peter, " Save Lord, or I " periſh." Need I my dear friends, add that this conviction is attended with an abhorrence of ſin, and the forſaking of it? Surely if there is a ſoul in the preſence of God that has experienced this firſt work of the Spirit, he has *ceaſed from evil and is learning to do well*. There can be no true repentance without producing it's conſequent fruits. The ſoul then that yields to this firſt divine operation, is by the ſame power convinced, that

 there

there is no other Name given under Heaven by which he can be ſaved, but the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; *that he alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that there is no coming to the Father but by him*; that *he is the one Mediator between God and Man*; that *he is the very God and the only Saviour of ſinners*; and as ſuch, the broken-hearted, ſelf-convicted, ſelf-condemned, ſelf-renouncing ſinner caſts himſelf upon him, by an Act of ſaving Faith wrought in him by the ſame ſpirit, and *is thereby juſtified from all things, from which he could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes.* And *being* thus *juſtified by Faith*, as St. *Paul* ſays, *he has Peace with God*, and henceforth *rejoiceth in Hope of the Glory of God which ſhall be revealed*; yea *he glorieth in Tribulations*, and is endued with that *Hope which maketh not aſhamed*, becauſe *the love of God is ſhed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghoſt which is given to him, and now beareth witneſs with his ſpirit that he is paſſed from Death to Life, and is become a child of God, his ſins being all forgiven.* Theſe and many more experiences and privileges of the children of God, or of the perfect and upright man you may ſee in the 5th and 8th Chapters of the *Romans*, in the Epiſtle to the *Gal.* and ſeveral other parts of the New Teſtament. Now it is that he knoweth that he is born of God, for he experi-

ences

ences power over ſin, and there is no need that *ſin ſhould have dominion over him, for he is not under the law but under Grace.* He ſhews *his love to God by keeping all his Commandments*, and meditates therein day and night. He is *cloathed with the armour of God*, and fights under the banner of the Croſs againſt the World, the Fleſh and the Devil. He renounces the Pomps and Vanities of Life, *chooſes rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon; eſteems the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the periſhable treaſures of this World, as having reſpect to the recompence of the reward. His heart and treaſure are in heaven, and his life is hid with Chriſt in God. The world knoweth him not*; he is a myſtery to them, *becauſe they knew not Jeſus*, to whom his ſervant is in all things conformed. Such a ſoul no longer pants for earthly joys, but for God, even the living God; it thirſts for all the ſalvation of God, and waits to experience the moſt extenſive promiſes of the new and everlaſting covenant, that is, *to be made a partaker of the divine nature, to be filled with all the fulneſs of God*, and then *to be received into the joy of his Lord*, the kingdom of eternal reſt.

Now

Now my dear friends, this is the perfect and upright man that my text exhorts us to mark. This is the man whoſe light truly ſhines, and whoſe good works are obvious. All ſuch who anſwer the deſcription of this perfect and upright man, are bright and ſhining lights of which there are but few in the world comparatively ſpeaking, and of whom it is written that, *the world is not worthy*; yet nevertheleſs we are commanded *to mark them*. But what ſhall we ſee in them? Why every Chriſtian virtue! Juſtice, Mercy, Truth, Benevolence, Meekneſs, Temperance, Humility, Patience, Reſignation, Fortitude, Faith, Love, and all the Graces of the Spirit, and fruits of Righteouſneſs. And as I have before obſerved, we are not to mark them for mere ſpeculation, but for *imitation*; that we may have deſires kindled in our breaſt that will put us upon ſtriving to follow them as they follow Chriſt. To encourage us hereto, we are not only *to mark* them in their courſe upon earth, but to take particular notice of them at the *cloſe of life*, as being told that *the End of the perfect and upright man is Peace*. When he is called to *give an account of his Stewardſhip*, he can do it with joy and not with regret. His grand buſineſs for which he

became

became a probationer upon earth is adjuſted, and Death which is a King of Terrors to a guilty, careleſs, Chriſtleſs Soul is to him a meſſenger of Peace, for he has long *wiſhed to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt, which is far better; and being riſen with Chriſt, he has placed his affections on things that are above, and not on things that are below.* The dying Chriſtian can ſay, with St. *Paul, I have fought the good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, henceforth there is a crown of Righteouſneſs laid up for me, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me in that Day.* O! thou poor Worldling! what wouldſt thou give in a dying hour to exchange thy lands, and all thy earthly poſſeſſions for thoſe riches of Grace, and draughts of Conſolations, that are poured into the Hearts of the poor deſpiſed ſervants of God, in that moment when all material things ſhall fail thee, thy Honours, thy Friends, thy Riches, and all thy earthly Good? The Wiſh will then be too late; for it will be ſaid to thine inmoſt Soul in the moſt ſtriking Accent, this perfect, upright man *hath choſen the good Part which ſhall never be taken from him*; but thou alas! haſt ſquandered away all thy days in pride and vanity, and in the ſordid ſatisfaction of a tranſitory

Life! O what will thou then do! May the Lord, even now ſo alarm thy conſcience, and ſo awaken thee by this ſolemn warning, that thou mayeſt *go and buy oil for thy veſſel* before the opportunity is irrecoverably paſt. Yea, determine to follow the footſteps of Chriſt's Flock, while yet it is called *To-day*, for when *once the Maſter of the Houſe is riſen up, and has ſhut to the door*, not all thy dying Agonies and Groans will prevail with him to open to thee: but if thou wouldſt eſcape the Damnation of Hell, be thou an Imitator of the Followers of Jeſus, or of Jeſus Himſelf. Part with thoſe ſins of thine that would ſink thee lower than the Grave; forſake a world that is haſtening to a moſt awful period, and *what thine hand findeth to do* for God, and for thine immortal ſoul, *do it with thy Might, for there is neither Knowledge nor Device in the Grave, whither thou art poſting* as an arrow thro' the Air. O! be ſolicitous for what only can ſoften thy dying couch! that is an intereſt in a bleeding Saviour. Seek to be waſhed in his atoning Blood, to be cloathed with his Righteouſneſs, and endued with his Spirit. *Fly! Haſte* thee to the ſinner's Friend!

Take

Take him for thy Prophet to inſtruct thy wandering Soul, thy Prieſt to atone for thy Tranſgreſſions, and thy King to reign in thy heart, and *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is Peace.* So *mark*, as to follow his example, and partake of his Felicity in Time and in Eternity.

It might have been better for another than me, to have ſpoken upon the preſent occaſion; but as Providence has detained me here for ſuch a ſolemn time, and as you are no ſtrangers to our dear deceaſed friend, I am perſuaded you will excuſe me, if I ſay, that he who has ſo lately left this inhoſpitable world, and on whoſe account we are now aſſembled, did in all reſpects come near to the character of the perfect and upright man; or like another Nathaniel, he was *an Iſraelite* a Chriſtian *indeed, in whom was no guile.* It may with great propriety be ſaid that he feared God from his youth, that he ſought the divine favour in the earlieſt part of life, and that tho' he was careful to maintain good works, yet he never reſted in them, or in any ſelf-confidence, always believing there was ſomething more requiſite to enſure eternal life, than an outward conformity to the

the law. And in ſearch of this neceſſary qualification for heaven, his mind was always engaged, till he heard the grand Doctrine of ſalvation by faith, as preached by that great man the Revd. Mr. JOHN WESLEY, at which time he heartily renounced every other plea than that of the blood and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, and ever after built upon that ſure foundation; and with the Apoſtle *Paul determined to know nothing but Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified.* In a word he ſeemd to be ſo ſpiritualized, as if nothing ſhort of the full enjoyment of Chriſt, and the abiding preſence of God his Saviour could ſatisfy him: So that for him to die, was but to ſhut his eyes upon all ſublunary things, that he might open them in eternity to behold his *Beloved, face to face, without a veil between.* Death to him was but an happy tranſition into the ever bleſſed and glorious preſence of his adorable ſaviour.

Have not many of you my friends been witneſſes of his great integrity, humanity and univerſal benevolence; of his meekneſs, patience and reſignation thro' a ſeries of the moſt trying circumſtances? Have you not ſeen his deadneſs to the world and unreſerved

reſerved devotedneſs to piety. Conſider him in his public character, as a Lawyer, and the whole Iſland can witneſs to his ability, and the honour he brought to the profeſſion, in every reſpect. View him in the performance of every relative duty, and you ſee in him, a kind, tender huſband; a fond, indulgent father; a very affectionate brother; a true, ſincere, ſympathizing friend, and what takes all in, a *real* Chriſtian.—I know that theſe things have not been unmarked by many of you, tho' it is to be feared not with any deſire to imitate him; perhaps it was only to blame his diſregard to what the worldly-wiſe man makes his idol; O! that you had conſidered that *one thing is needful, and that they who chuſe that good part, it ſhall never be taken from them.* May you all be convinced of it before that time, when all the intervening circumſtances of life being paſt, eternity ſhall prove the neceſſity of making ſuch a choice. *Mark therefore the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* And ſo it proved with our dear friend, when in nature's lateſt ſtruggles his friends ſaid to him, "Are you happy," he replied "Yes! yes!" The ſudden turn his diſorder took, and the nature of it, prevented his ſpeak-

ing, but to give anſwers to queſtions aſked him, otherwiſe, as might be ſuppoſed, we ſhould have heard more of his happy experience, and many things might have dropped from his lips for the edification of thoſe who out of a friendly regard, attended upon him in the laſt ſad intereſting ſcene.

Who now amongſt us will not ſay? *O! let me die the Death of the righteous, and let my laſt end be like his.* The wiſh is truly laudable, but not to be obtained upon any other terms but the forſaking of ſin, and all the vain delights of earth, and the exerciſing of *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. You muſt be born again.* You muſt be regenerated by the ſpirit of our God; or as he is true, *you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* My dear friends, it is in love to your ſouls that I deal thus plainly with you. Eternal things are deeply impreſſed upon my heart; and I know that *without holineſs you cannot ſee God.* O! that you would be perſuaded to ſeek this qualification for heaven. Seek it by coming to Jeſus, *that Lamb of God who takes away the ſins of the world,* and has graciouſly promiſed that if *you come to him, he will in no wiſe caſt you out*;

as

as alſo to them *who believe in his Name, he will give the right or privilege to become the ſons of God,* and *he is the ſame yeſterday, to-day and for-ever,* the immutable Jehovah. I hope there are ſome in this place who are determined to live the life of the righteous, that with them they might enter into the joy of their Lord. Theſe I would nevertheleſs exhort to ſtir up the gift of God that is within them, and to ſee that they let their light ſhine more and more, that others by obſerving their good works may glorify their father who is in heaven. O! my friends, give me leave to exhort every one of you to give all diligence to make your calling and election ſure, and to let nothing divert you from ſo good a purpoſe; but through the grace of God, be you ſtedfaſt and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as you know, your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Now to God, Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all Glory, Majeſty and Dominion, henceforth for-ever more.

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